

## **Science, Religion, and Environmentalism: Interwoven Worldviews**

Course Number: GE 1 DW MTWR 12:00-12:50, HSSB 2251

Institution: University of California, Santa Barbara

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### **Summary Description**

This seminar will help you clarify the scientific and religious dimensions of environmentalism, and understand the interwoven worldviews that have accompanied the development of various forms of science, religion, and environmentalism. The course will include online assignments and discussions, weekly movies, and training in qualitative and quantitative analysis.

### **Intent and Objectives**

Many general education courses understandably focus on one particular discipline or topic; you have perhaps already taken several courses of this nature. Yet one unfortunate result is that you may never learn how to compare or synthesize knowledge acquired from different GE courses. This ability to "put the pieces together" is arguably a major objective of general education, and is one of our highest priorities for GE 1 DW. In this course, you will focus on one particular concept—worldviews—and will apply it to help understand some of the important linkages between science, religion, and environmentalism. The concept of worldviews is only one means to put the pieces of your education together, but it is a very powerful one, because it offers a way to compare what initially seem to be quite disparate topics. Anything we do, whether science, religion, or environmentalism (or other human endeavors) presumes some way of looking at the world, some way of understanding ourselves in relation to the world—in short, a worldview. That's why the concept of worldviews is so useful.

A related objective of GE 1 DW is for you to start thinking carefully about your own worldview in the context of its scientific, religious, and environmental dimensions. Many of us have studied science, participated in religious groups, and thought about environmental issues, so all of these areas have probably influenced our worldviews. The intent of this course is definitely NOT to force you to adopt or disavow a particular worldview; it is rather to give you the opportunity to reflect on how you look at the world and how you understand yourself in relation to the world. Understanding the worldviews of others goes hand in hand with deeper understanding of our own worldviews; these two activities are thus complementary.

Another objective is for you to develop, or advance your mastery of, some important academic skills. One important skill involves reading: you all know how to read, of course, but do you understand everything you read? Can you identify and critique the main argument contained in a reading? Can you efficiently search the library to find readings related to a particular topic of interest to you? And then there is the equally important skill of writing: can you clearly and compellingly communicate your ideas in

written form? Can you develop and defend a position via an argumentative essay? In addition to helping you advance your reading and writing skills, GE 1 DW will help you develop skills in empirical analysis. Somehow you have to make sense of different worldviews you find among people. How do you go about doing that? We will examine the strengths and limitations of two major methods, one quantitative, the other qualitative.

A final objective is contained within the three objectives mentioned above. A university education teaches you not only about this topic and that topic; ultimately, it teaches you how to think. Thinking about worldviews is particularly difficult for many people, because it involves "thinking about thinking," i.e., critical reflection on the assumptions underlying different ways of thinking about the world. When it comes to thinking about your own worldview, it's like asking a domesticated fish (assuming it could talk!) to tell us about its fishbowl. If the fishbowl is the only world it has ever known, it may struggle to gain any perspective on its context. But the academic tradition is one in which critical thinking of this sort is seen as not only possible but necessary if people are to live free and full lives, so we will prioritize working on critical thinking throughout the course.

### **Readings**

GE 1 DW is different from many other undergraduate courses you may take in that, for two of the four class meeting hours per week, you will take part in reading seminars, and lecture will occupy only one meeting hour per week (one hour is also devoted to movie analysis; [see below](#)). Clearly, readings are a priority in this course; the seminar method allows us to discuss each reading in depth in a small-group setting. You will read some of the best writings available for the topics we study together, and you will answer discussion questions on each reading online prior to the reading seminar. A list of all readings can be found [below](#). You will be graded both for the quality of answers you post online, and for your participation in our class seminar; in both cases you should plan to do your very best. It is okay if there are portions of the reading or discussion questions that you find difficult to understand, but make sure and try anyway. It is less important for you to get the right answer than to work hard in understanding the material, and you will be graded accordingly.

All readings have been assembled into a course reader, available starting April 1 (no fooling) from Alternative Copy in Isla Vista. Here is a recommended strategy for your readings:

1. Click on the appropriate reading in the online [class schedule](#) to see the discussion questions that you will need to answer for the reading.
2. Read with these questions in mind. Compose preliminary answers. Re-read to check and expand your answers.
3. Go back to the [class schedule](#) and click on the appropriate reading to post your answers online. Please include each question or an abbreviated heading next to the related answer

so that we may clearly delineate your response (which will consist of one posting only for all reading questions).

4. Come to class ready to discuss these questions, summarize your answers, and ask for clarification on parts of the reading you did not understand.

### **Movies**

Each week will begin with a 30-minute movie segment followed by a discussion of the movie. The purpose of each movie is to introduce the week's theme and explore it in the context of popular culture and/or popularization via film. For each movie, you will complete online a set of discussion questions, available in advance via the [class schedule](#). For a listing of the movies, see the [class schedule](#).

### **Lectures**

Lectures for GE 1 DW are intended to broadly summarize material for the weekly theme. Our lectures will be given at the end, rather than the beginning, of the week in order to review and synthesize reading and movie material discussed earlier, and so that you will have some background in the theme by that point. Though lectures are necessarily less interactive than seminars, we still encourage you to come to lecture with questions you have not yet answered, and to be prepared to answer questions the instructor may ask of you.

All lectures will be made available online shortly prior to presentation, so that you may download lecture notes as a template for your note-taking. For a list of lectures and links to their online versions, see the [class schedule](#).

### **Weekly Assignments**

In addition to the reading and movie assignments (see above), you will complete weekly projects as a major part of GE 1 DW; for full details, consult the [weekly assignment page](#). The intent of the weekly assignments is for you to deepen your learning, and demonstrate your understanding, of each week's topic. Projects are assigned on the Monday class session for each week, and due the following Monday by classtime.

In addition to these assignments, any possible extra credit opportunities will be announced in class.

### **Exams**

There will be one final exam for GE 1 DW, and no midterm or quizzes. The final exam will include the following components:

A take-home essay question, to be posted online by the final exam date.

A set of matching questions connected with basic terminology we have learned.

Sentence-completion questions reflecting content taking from the readings.

Short-answer questions drawing upon some of the major concepts we have discussed.

The final exam is scheduled for **Monday June 10, 12-3 PM**. Further information will be provided closer to the exam date.

### **Grading**

Your in-progress grade for GE 1 DW may be viewed [online](#). This is so you can be sure of your progress in the course, and speak to the instructor immediately if any questions arise. Your final grade will be computed as follows:

5%: Movie discussion questions (graded as submitted/not submitted) and participation

30%: Reading discussion questions (graded on scale of 1 to 5) and seminar participation

40%: Weekly assignments (graded on scale of 1 to 10)

25%: Final examination

### **Readings**

There will be one assigned reading for each of the two weekly reading seminars in this course. You will be reading many classics in the field. Classics may occasionally be difficult, but your efforts will be rewarded by the deep insights they offer. Make sure to consult the assignments page for guidelines on how best to prepare for each seminar by doing the reading and answer the related webforum question.

An alphabetical list of readings is below; the [class schedule](#) specifies the date for each reading.

Albanese, Catherine L. 1990. Recapitulating Pieties: Nature's nation in the late twentieth century. In *Nature religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age*, 153-198. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Barbour, Ian G. 2000. Four views of science and religion. In *When science meets religion: Enemies, strangers, or partners?*, 7-38. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

Bellah, Robert Neelly. 1970. Religion and belief: The historical background of "non-belief". In *Beyond belief: Essays on religion in a post-traditional world*, 216-228. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Berry, Wendell. 2000. Ignorance. In *Life is a miracle: An essay against modern superstition*, 3-12. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint.

Brooke, John Hedley. 1991. Interaction between science and religion: Some preliminary considerations. In *Science and religion: Some historical perspectives*, 16-51. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Carson, Rachel. 1962. A fable for tomorrow; The obligation to endure. In *Silent Spring*, 1-3; 5-13. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Dilthey, Wilhelm. [1911] 1957. On the conflict of systems; Life and world view. In *Dilthey's philosophy of existence: Introduction to Weltanschauungslehre*, 17-20; 21-30. Translated from *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. VIII. New York: Bookman Associates.

Eckberg, Douglas Lee, and T. Jean Blocker. 1996. Christianity, environmentalism, and the theoretical problem of fundamentalism. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Dec, 343-355.

Ehrlich, Paul R., and Anne H. Ehrlich. 1996. In defense of science. In *Betrayal of science and reason: How anti-environmental rhetoric threatens our future*, 25-44. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Eliade, Mircea. 1959. Introduction; Sacred space and making the world sacred (in part). In *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion*, 8-18; 20-32. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Horkheimer, Max. 1947. The revolt of nature. In *The eclipse of nature*, 92-127. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lewontin, R. C. 1991. A reasonable skepticism. In *Biology as ideology: The doctrine of DNA*, 1-16. New York: Harper Collins.

Merchant, Carolyn. 1980. Nature as female. In *The death of nature: Women, ecology, and the scientific revolution*, 1-41. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Naeem, S. et al. 1999. Biodiversity and ecosystem functioning: Maintaining natural life support processes. *Issues in Ecology* 4:1-14.

Putnam, Hilary. 1990. Beyond the fact/value dichotomy. In *Realism with a human face*, 135-141. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Smart, Ninian. 1996. Introduction. In *Dimensions of the sacred: An anatomy of the world's beliefs*, 1-25. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tucker, Mary Evelyn, and John A. Grim. 2001. Introduction: The emerging alliance of world religions and ecology. *Daedalus*, Fall, 1-22.

Weinberg, Steven. 1994. What about God? In *Dreams of a final theory*, 241-261. New York: Vintage Books.

White, Lynn. 1967. The historical roots of our ecological crisis. *Science* 155:1203-1207.

## **Web Info**

[Registration](#) | [FAQ](#)

In GE 1 DW, you will complete all of your weekly, reading, and movie assignments online, as well as browse lectures and other course resources. It is very important that you develop an acceptable level of comfort with using the Internet as a part of this course. Below is some basic information you will need to know.

### **Registration**

Each student will need to complete an online registration procedure prior to submitting assignments.

[Click here](#) to register for the GE 1DW online activities

### **Frequently-Asked Questions**

**I'm confused about all the passwords I need to use; can you please explain?**

Due to software limitations, the [online registration procedure](#) directs you to register separately for your class assignments and GO (Grades Online), which take one password, and your webforum postings, which take another password. (You may use the same password for both, if you wish.) In addition to your assignments/GO password and webforum password, there is a generic username and password all participants will use for accessing the lectures online. So, this means there are three passwords total.

**More questions? Please [email the instructor](#)**

### **Acknowledgments**

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